Dissertatio de Pace, &c.

OF A

DISCOURSE

Touching the

Peace and Concord

OF THE

CHURCH.

WHEREIN

First, Is Elegantly and Accurately argued, That its not so much a bare Error in Opinion, as a bad Life, excludes a Christian out of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Secondly, That the things necessary to be known for the attainment of Salvation are very Few and Easie.

Lastly, That those who pass amongst us under the Names of *Heretick*s and *Dissenters*, are notwithstanding to be Tolerated.

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TO THE

READER.

THe Author of this Discourse, Christian Reader, a Man, as it appeareth, both Pious and Learned, knowing that of all the Families and Societies of *Christians*, they are most hated, who by their Profession and Writings maintain the Opinion of *Socinus* touching the *Essence* and *Office* of Christ, endeavoured by this Discourse to abate the hatred of certain Zealots against the *Socinians*, not that he approved their Doctrine (for he once and again disowns it) but because he was perswaded, that if the harsh Judgments of men were once mitigated concerning the most odious Opinion of all, the heat of that bitter Zeal wherewith *Christians* are generally incited to persecute Dissenters in Religion, would by degrees evaporate. But if thou, *Christian* Reader, dost from thy heart aspire to the knowledge of God, and his Son Jesus Christ, therein, as Christ himself testifieth, eternal

Life doth consist, *John* 17. 3. Fetch not the beginning thereof either from *Socinus*, (a man otherwise of great understanding in the Mystery of the Gospel) nor from his Adversaries, but being mindful of those words, *Luke* 10.22. *None knowing who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him*; Lay aside for a while Controversal Writings, together with those prejudicate Opinions that have been instilled into thine unwary Understanding; and closely applying thy self to the search of the New-Covenant, most ardently implore the Grace of Christ, that he would be pleased to manifest himself and the Father to thee, and make no doubt but the true Light will at length illuminate the eyes of thy Mind, that thou mayst walk in the way that leadeth unto Life. *Farewel.*

THE

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CHAP.

A Discourse

DISCOURSE
Touching the
PEACE and CONCORD
OF THE
Church.

CHAP. I.

The Lot of Truth and Innocency in this World. A Guess of the Author touching himself.

TRuth was never called into question, but *Innocency* was fain to plead for her self at the same Bar; nor hath the *One* been more hated than the *Other* always envied. Indeed we Men are very prone to Evil, and therefore hate not only the *open* freedom of a true Judgment, but also the *tacite* censure of another's Integrity. Nor is this a Crime peculiar to our Age. 'Twas heretofore the disposition of Wickedness, no less to fear the mute *Innocency* of another, than the living Voice of a Reprover; nor can it be otherwise *hereafter*, but that Virtue should become a *Goad* to their senses, whose Minds have been seized with Vices. But though *our* wickedness may seem to have a kind of right to detest such *Truth*, as toucheth the *Ulcers* of our sins, yet why should we abominate her that casts a harmless eye towards Heaven? Is it because, as both these cure the two diseases of the Mind, our *Errours* namely, and our *Vices*, so we are delighted with both those Distempers? Undoubtedly here lies the pinch. We are more enamoured of our *Errours* than of all our Darlings, either because they wink at the scapes and dalliance of our *Affections*; or because we are enraged against *Dissenters* with obstinate *Prejudice* and frantick affectation of *Parties*. Howbeit, we never *erre* with greater de-

delight than about the sense of *divine Matters*, and are so far from acknowleding those slips, (the witnesses of *humane Imbecility*) that we account them for Oracles. Nor is our rashness content to have pleased *her self* herein, but obtrudeth her Notions upon *others* against their Wills: and the licence of determining is wont to assume so much to it self, that it excludeth a liberty of *dissenting* in the smallest tittle. After the Judgments of Mankind had been oppressed in this manner, the Church for many Ages was overspread with *thick darkness*, whil'st the greatest part had neither liberty to *utter* what they understood, nor list to *understand* what they might not utter. And though there have been so many winds and storms of Contention in the *Christian World*, yet have they not to this very day been able to dispel so great a *Fog*, so that amidst the *Clouds* dispersed over all the Skie, there are some few who through the Intervals behold the whole face of the *Sun*; whil'st others see afar off some gleams of the light, but shall ere long discover the very *Sun* it self. The *Truth* being thus muffled with *Errours*, hath not yet shewn her self to all with a full countenance, altho she hath aforehand darted out the rays of her light unto a great part of men. But whatsoever is to come hereafter, divine things are at present envelloped with gross darkness. Yet is there nothing that more obscureth the Mystery of *Eternal Salvation* than the Ignorance of the way, that leadeth us to the top of so great happiness. For as all things situated on high, are wont to have a hard and difficult access; so also hath that *towring* height of the Life to come. Nor is it for every man to get up through steep ascents, especially for them whose *earthly Minds* & *dull Spirits* press them down to *low desires*.

And therefore to the great destruction of Mankind, *another* way to happiness hath been invented, *easie* indeed and expedite, but such as reacheth not to the end aimed at. For the greatest part of men, thinking it very toilsome to ascend thither by *Holiness of Life*, sought out a shorter cut, consisting in *Ceremonies*, the meer confession of *Faith*. And this is the way by which the greatest part as yet think to ascend to Heaven, not caring what their *actions* are, so their *Opinions* be right, and tho extreamly curious to pry into other things, yet having no regard to their *Life* and *Manners*. So that it is no marvel, inasmuch as Men every where take greater care of their *Wit* than of their *Minds*, that the very least failing in the *Knowledge* of divine things should be esteemed of greater moment to eternal destruction than the commission of the foulest *Crimes*. But this seemeth somewhat monstrous, how some men should arrive at so much Confidence, as that, tho in their *Life* & *Manners* they even against their wills acknowledg'd the *failings* of their Mortality, yet

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in their *Judgments* and *Opinions* they should forget their *Condition*: and tho in the very *Soul of Faith*, I mean *Good Works*, they do by reason of their sins so often slip, should yet imagine that in the Carcase only, I mean *Faith*, they cannot possibly offend. For, whence proceedeth this blind and precipitant humour of condemning others, but from rashness of *defining*? Whence so great boldness of determining, but from the presumption of an Infallible Judgment? And, which is worst of all, a man now-a-days can no sooner fail in his Understanding, but presently his *Honesty* is reproached; and oftentimes the reprehension of *Opinions* degenerateth into the accusation of *Manners*. As for my self, before I lanch out of the Haven; I do already foresee *Storms*; nor am I in so great fear for the Opinion which I purpose in this *Discourse*, as for my *Credit* and *Security*. For how few are there who will censure this *Treatise*, without doing Injury to the Author? who is there that will set a mark on some mistake thereof, and not withal brand me with some reproach? If any thing here shall seem false to some men, they will account me not only a *Lyar*, but an *Impious* Person. They will call me *Deceiver*, and Patron of damned *Heresy*; and this Writing will be sofisty-cussed by many, that I my self perhaps, were I known, should not escape Scot free. But my Mind being pure and untainted, will from my *Conscience* reap that fruit of my Labour, which was due to it from the Judgments of Men: nor will I esteem it a weak Argument of having defended the Truth, to have my Innocency so wickedly traduced. For the same Spirit is wont to oppose both of them: nor ought it to seem strange to any man, that a most true *Opinion* should be unjustly taxed of *Errour*, when he shall see his own Innocency circumvented with false accusations. Never-heless I instantly beseech them, who after they have read this Discourse, shall vote concerning my Reputation, that they would not charge me with other men's Faults; and that my harmless freedom may not be any prejudice to me. Let none impute to me the Patronage of *Errour*, if I have perhaps been favourable unto *such as erre*; unless he suppose it to be the duty of a man, when he is displeased with the *Vices*, to be angry with the *Persons* also.

CHAP. II.

What things concerning God and Christ are necessary to be known unto Salvation; and what are the Parts of true Faith.

THE whole body of the Church hath now for a long time been infested with an *evil Spirit*, which sets the several Members at odds

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amongst themselves. Certainly it is obstinate *Ambition* that cherisheth the humour of raising *Parties*, much oyl is poured on this flame by a vain persuasion concerning the points in controversie, that in each of them the *sum of our Religion* lies at stake. How deeply this opinion hath taken root in our minds, is evident from the Civil Wars amongst us, whereby our hatred turneth to our mutual Ruine. But how frivulous and false it is, shall plainly appear from what we mean to speak afterwards; wherein to examine all things that come into debate, would be a long and toilsome Business. It is sufficient to cull out one of the chiefest points in Controversy, which if we shall evince not to be *necessarily required* to the attainment of *Eternal Happiness*, much less will it be true in the other lighter ones. And this is an exact knowledge of the *Divine Essence* (as they term it) and a distinct Explication of the *Holy Trinity*. Undoubtedly no man can comprehend the *Nature of God*, and the restless disposition of our Mind doth here in him bestir it self, to reach so high a Mystery in this Life. We may indeed by our Reason very easily separate not only *Defects*, but also the very shadow of Imperfection from so great a Majesty, but to form in our Minds an Image *worthy* of that most noble Essence, is beyond the compass of our Mortality. And consequently we may, and ought to know what it *is not*: but to know what *it is*, though we were never so much bound to it, yet are we not able; unless perhaps that God is the King and Lord of the Universe, and other such like things; which if we speak properly, belong not to his Essence. It cannot be denied that some of these things are discovered to us by the *sacred Oracles*, but they are few, and some of them only shadowed out with obscure Lineaments: and if there be *any*, wherein all *Christians* are not agreed, they are at this day enwrapped with so many twisted Thorns of *Sophisters*, and also heretofore discussed with so much wrangling, that they are as yet doubted of by many. Adde hereunto the probable allegation of the Scriptures on both sides; so that if one will hear both Parties without Prejudice, he will not for the most part so easily rid himself out of so great Intricacies. It is not my purpose to stretch my own Wit, to ingage in dispute on either side. It is sufficient if I demonstrate, *that these Questions that concern the more special Explication of the Divine Essence, and the accurate distinction of Persons, although they be never so profitable, yet are not necessary to Salvation*: or, which is all one, *that a Christian may arrive at the promised Goal of happiness, although he be either ignorant of those things, or (such is the condition of our weakness) in an errour or mistake about them.* If *Errour* in these things take not away Salvation,

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much less Ignorance. And therefore that there may be no superfluity in this Discourse, we will at present insist only on the former.

When I consider the way that bringeth us to Heaven, methinks such contemplations as *these* are out of the Road of our Journey. For indeed, what maketh us sufficiently, yea, abundantly fitted for *Eternal Life*, but *Faith working by Love*, for which only we shall be pronounced *Just*? But if one may have *this Faith*, although he have wrong conceit touching the Mystery of the *Holy Trinity*, what hinders but that he may together with this *Errour* be received both into Heaven and into the Church? Now lest any one should be deceived in the Notion of *Errour*, I do not now give so mild a Name to their Wickedness, who whil'st the Truth was yet clear and open in the Church, and called into doubt by none, did *first* spread darkness over this *Article*; but to their failing, who in our times

Do fear the Greeks even when they offer Gifts.

That is, who having been cozened with so many Lyes and Cheats of *Antichrist*, dare not believe him even when he seemeth to speak *Truth*: as shall be further made appear by the sequel of the Discourse. Moreover that *perfit Faith* is not taken away by that *Errour*, we shall easily perceive, if we enquire into any part thereof. Nor verily shall you find in the whole Compass of our Faith, that more Duties are required of Believers, than *assent* to the Promises of Jesus Christ, and *Obedience* to his Precepts. The first of which the Apostle *James*, cap. 2. very aptly intimateth to the *Body* of Faith; and the second to the *Soul* thereof. To the belief of the Promises, that plain Confession is sufficient, which passeth under the Name of *The Apostles Creed*: and if there can be any thing else requisite, I see not what can be added, besides the *Reverence due to the Holy Scriptures*; to which, if *Credence* be once denyed, the certainty of our Salvation is brought into danger. Now whether *both* or *one* of these compleat the whole nature of that Faith, which is due to the Divine Promises, certainly Experience it self testifieth, that such as erre in the knowledge of the aforesaid Mystery, may excellently discharge this part of *Faith*. For they without any Exception give credence to the holy Scripture, and to the Apostles Creed. And therefore what is wanting to beget in them a full Belief, that God cannot chuse but perform his Promise? For, that the things aforesaid are sufficient to the Belief hereof, is even from hence manifest. God hath promised us Salvation by his Son. To rely on this Promise, it is enough if we be perswaded, that God both can & will give unto us what he hath promised. For by this means all the Causes of distrust being pared a-

away, there will be no ground left to doubt of so great a Promise. But whil'st they believe the Holy Scriptures & (their Abridgment) the Apostles Creed, they cannot in the least doubt concerning the Power or Will of God; when notwithstanding they may mistake in the knowledge of his Essence. Wherefore this first part of Faith is not taken away by that Errour. As for Obedience to the Precepts of Christ, certainly this can much less be taken away by such mistakings. For neither was it the purpose of God, by giving his Commandments to exercise the sharpness of our Wit, but the Goodness of our *Will*. And therefore how blind soever our knowledge is in abstruser things, yet may our Will be conformed to the obedience of the divine Law, than which nothing is more manifest and open. Nor doth the *Piety* of sundry erring Persons, here need an Advocate, in that it sufficiently pleadeth for it self, and oftentimes sheweth its Faith even in silent works, which very many vainly boasting of, cannot find in their Life and Actions. Neither indeed hath any thing been enjoyned us, wherein our Vertue and Obedience may not shew themselves. For what need is there to invite us with Rewards to those things, which we willingly perform of our own accord? But they buy happiness at a very *cheap rate*, who spend nothing but the Labour of their Wit upon it. For he that is never so wicked and careless of his Salvation, may know some *Truth* concerning God. Nor can we boast of our Obedience in such things, unless we admit the damned Spirits to a share in our Praise. Besides, the nature of all Precepts ought to be such, as that it might evidently appear to all, who are to perform them, that they are prescribed. But how manifest this Doctrine touching the *Trinity* is, the *incredible height* of the very thing it self sheweth; and how manifestly it is *prescribed*, the Labours and Contentions of so many *Fathers* and *Councils* heretofore testifie. Yea, though something in this point were never so much enjoyned to be known and believed, yet none refuseth to believe those things that are expresly extant in the Holy Scriptures: nor is there any one so *impious* as to contradict them. All the Controversy is about *Meanings* and *Consequences*, wherein an errour and falling doth no more infer Disobedience, and consequently *Damnation*, than the simplicity of an obsequious Servant, who not *rightly understanding* the command of his Master, did *yet obey*, as far as he was able. But if we may believe the *Promises* of Jesus Christ, and obey his *Precepts*, altho we are mistaken in such a manner, what shall we want to the full possession of a *Lively Faith*? Is there yet any thing in the nature of Faith, uncomprehended in those two parts? But there is a wonderful silence in

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the Sacred Oracles concerning that third part; nor do I see how that Faith is not perfit, which is *Lively*; or how that is not lively, which consisteth in a manner of its Body and Soul. But you will say, that we are necessarily to believe many things, which are neither the very *Precepts* nor *Promises*. To which I answer, that they so belong to one of these, that without them neither can be rightly performed; of which sort is the *Omnipotency* of God, and the like *Attributes*, as also the *Creation*, *Providence*, &c. which though they be neither the *Precepts*, nor the *Promises*, yet cannot the belief of the *Promises* consist *without* them; so that an Errour in them is not now dangerous, but altogether *pestilent* and pernicious. But it hath been clearly proved that Errours about these Doctrines, touching which the whole Discourse hath been set on foot, subvert neither Member of Faith, at least in their own nature, and unavoidably.

CHAP. III.

That sincere Love towards God and Christ is sufficient to Salvation; and that the same may be in such as erre.

LEt us adde an *Appendix* to this Argument, which may even be in stead of a *new* reason. Who therefore dares to condemn him to the punishment of Eternal Death, in whom liveth the sincere *Love* of his Creator and Redeemer? Or what more certain pledge of Eternal Happiness is there, than to love God and the Lord Jesus Christ, with the whole heart, and all the Powers of the Mind? This indeed is abundantly manifest, inasmuch as the sum of our Obedience lieth herein; which though it be not the *Cause* of our Salvation, yet is it at least the *way*, and an evident argument and most certain *sign* thereof. Now if it shall be made plainly to appear, that they, who are not able to extricate themselves out of those perplexed and craggy Questions, whereof we have spoken, may notwithstanding in the mean time *love God* and the Lord Jesus Christ, with all the Powers of their Mind; what cause will there be, why we should not think that the same Persons may be *saved*? *Logicians* say, that the next and *immediate Cause* (as they term it) cannot be hindred, but it will out of hand produce the *effect*. Let us therefore in the first place consider the next Cause of this Love; and then we shall see whether it may be in Men so erring.

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The perfit Love of any one is bred in the Minds of the Lovers chiefly for three Causes concurring together. 1. From the firm and constant memory of such Benefits as are past, and from the sense of such as are present. For *Gratitude* also is a part of *Love*. 2. From a certain *hope* and confidence of supream Happiness to be obtained from the beloved thing, if you come to enjoy it, for Love languisheth without desire. 3. And finally from a perfit apprehension, as far as may be, of the Soveraign *Beauty* and excellency of the Object: which is the true and principal cause of the Love it self. Now forasmuch as neither the perfit Love of God, nor the perfit perception of his Excellency can *fully* happen to us in this Life: we mean not an *absolute Perfection* of both, but such as is the chiefest in its kind, namely, as great as can exist in this state of Mortality. Nor do I understand, what can be further required unto perfit Love. For who seeth not, that our *Will* can no more abstain from loving a perceived Beauty, than *Fire* from borning stubble put unto it? Which beauty, if it be *perfitly* seen, a *perfit* Love also will arise: but if no more than *perfitly* in its kind, a Love also *perfit* in its kind, will arise. Certainly, if any one denyeth that Soveraign Love necessarily proceedeth from such a Cause, he subverteth the Principles of Nature, which dictateth even to Children, that whatsoever seemeth good or beautiful, will also prove very pleasing; and so Love will be increased according to the Measure of the apprehended Beauty. It remaineth that we consider, whether such a *perfit* perception of the Excellency of God and his Christ, accompanied with those two helping Causes, may not be in them, who comprehend not those hidden and abstruse Mysteries of the Divine Essence. Which if it be in us *who do not erre*, it may also be in them, or it will be necessary to shew a Reason of the Prerogative, which *we* have above them in this Behalf. And first, let us speak of God the *Father*. As for the remembrance of his Favours, they acknowledge themselves together with us to be obliged unto him, perpetually making mention of his infinite Mercies; the chiefest whereof consisteth in taking us for his Children. As for the certain Expectation of a very great *Benefit*, what vaster *hope*, what lavisher *wish* can be fained, than that which they, together with us desire and expect from the most high God? There remaineth behind the contemplation of his *Beauty* and *Majesty*. I confess there is nothing in humane Matters so exact, that can lend a shadow to the Image of so great a Majesty. Nevertheless as touching God the *Father*, they do in a manner agree with us. For we are able to conceive nothing so great and sublime touching him, which they also do not conceive. Nor

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doth it follow, that because they do not reach the curious subtilty in the received distinction of *Persons*, therefore they cannot according to their Capacity conceive the beauty of the Divine Countenance, not to be seen by prophane Minds; and consequently dedicate and worship the Image of that unspeakable Majesty within the Sanctuary of their breast. As if it were a hard matter to have all manner of high conceptions touching him, whom you certainly know, and continually think to be the source and original of all Goodness and Beauty, although you do not comprehend Doctrines snarled and entangled with so many knots. Enough seemeth to be already spoken touching God the *Father*. But what if they have like, yea the same Causes with us of Love towards the *Son of God*, will any thing hinder them from being as capable of this Love as we our selves are? Let us begin from *Hope*. Do they not expect the same bountiful Right Hand of the Lord Jesus, which will hereafter reach out heavenly reward to all the Faithful? Do they not luxuriate in this wish? And who can chuse but feel his heart wounded with the Love of Christ, who setteth Christ before his Eyes, as giving him the pay of his Warfare? But you will say, that in making an estimate of his Favours they seem to be injurious to him, whil'st they affirm, that the Fathers anger towards us was appeased without the *Entermise* of Christ, and that no *Price*, properly so called, was paid for our sins. For I Perceive that almost all, who in the Article of the *Holy Trinity* dissent from us, are of that Opinion. I *defend* not the opinion of the Men, nevertheless I perceive that they judge a *Redemption*, properly so called, to be both absurd, and impossible. What derogation therefore is it either to Gratitude towards the Lord Jesus, or to the holy Memory of his Merits, if they imagine that he did not those things for our Sakes, which could at no hand be done; when in the mean time he abundantly performed all other things which might proceed from him towards us? For no other thing is required to the most strict obligation of a benefit, than that the Benefactor do for ones sake all that he is able. But they acknowledge that the Lord Jesus did for our Salvation spare no pains, yea, not his very Life. And though they do not think that his blood was spilt to appease God, and therefore not so rigidly to make *satisfaction* for our sins, yet do they hold that it was spent and given for our sakes; so that although they assert another special scope and effect of his death than we do, nevertheless they seem to acknowledge the *same merit* in general. And who would not be imbued with a most tender affection towards him, whom he supposeth to have undergone a most bitter death for his Life's sake? Who would

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not most ardently love him, whom he thinketh perpetually busied in conferring benefits upon him? To which, if you add an Expectation of Supreme Happiness from his hands, it cannot now happen otherwise, but that the Mind should melt in the resentment of a most dilicate flame. I come now to the *Excellency* of the Lord Jesus, which being imperfitly conceived by them, seemeth unable to excite a perfit Love of it self. For how great a diminution is it of his Majesty and Nobility, to have all that taken away from him, which he had from all Eternity? The Question is not now, whither their Opinion be *right*, who think that all power both in Heaven and Earth was at a certain time given to the Son of God, whereas he was formerly nothing but the *Word* and chief Prophet. But if true Love be conversant about the things that are present, and not about such as are past, (for neither doth this affection look backwards, to embrace the things that have been heretofore) certainly it is more to the purpose to consider, what they imagine touching his *present*, than what they conceive touching his past state and condition. For as Beauty being quite extinct, excites no Love of it self, because it flourished heretofore: so if the same be at present very happy, it causeth never the less love and admiration of it self, because it was not such formerly. What therefore do they attribute to our Saviour at present? Even *a Majesty equal unto God the Father*, and such excellency as riseth up above the highest pitch that can be imagined. For they serve and worship him as the onely Son of God, as a *True God*, and disposing all things with his beck; who describeth the Laws of the Universe according to his pleasure; who layeth tasks and commands upon the blessed Natives of Heaven; who with the bridle of his invincible power restraineth the Spirits banished out of Heaven; to whom the Stars and Elements willingly yield obedience, and who finally hath the very nature of things tribuary to him, from whence he levyeth the tax of his Church, and the assesment of his People. Now what derogation is it to his Honour, that he is beholding to his Father for the Fortune of so great a Dominion? Which thing even we our selves dare not wholly deny. Will the Opinion touching the Excellency of our Saviour flag in the judgment of our Love, when we shall erect the eyes of our Mind to his so sublime Majesties, who is fairer than the Stars and all light, and more glorious than the World it self? Why should I now commemorate his Immense Goodness and Wisdom, and his other divine Splendour, at the sight whereof the eyes of our Mind grow dim? Why should I recount his other praises, at which the Poverty of humane language waxeth dumb? All which they

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they, without any tergiversation ascribe to Jesus Christ their Saviour, although they otherwise erre in their Opinion of him. Now we must either hold that those things are not sufficient to excite Soveraign Love towards God the Father, and his Son: or that they cannot possibly be in *those Men* of whom we treat, if we suppose them uncapable of being touched with that holy ardour. Of which twain since neither seemeth probable, there is no question to be made, but they also may be ravished with that heavenly love, and so delivered from *Eternal Destruction*, and put in possession of Heaven, if so be they persevere therein unto the end.

CHAP. IV.

That though Faith and the Holy Spirit be the Gifts of God, yet erring Persons have, and may have them.

YEt some body may justly make a doubt, if *Faith* be the *Gift of God*, and such a perfit and entire Love ought to proceed only from the Impusion of the *Holy Spirit*, with what warrant we attribute that to the Power of the receiver, which lieth in the *meer pleasure* of the donor. For if we have *Faith* no other way than from the liberality of God, and that happeneth not to every one, certainly the benefit of so great a Gift consisteth in the meer good-pleasure of the munificent donor. Now, shall we little *Manikins* prescribe a Law to his most free Arbitrement, according to the form whereof he must of necessity make good this Bounty of his to a certain sort of men? Or shall we arrogate that to our power, which the sacred Oracles place in his hand? But is it credible that he will lavish out so excellent Gifts, (I speak of *Faith* and the *Holy Spirit*) on men depraved with so many Errours, and imbued with perverse Opinions concerning him? Admit they are *naturally* capable of so great a Good, yet ought they not presently to promise to themselves *this Grace of God*, which no man, that was in his Wits, did ever imagine to be due to the *deserts* of men, much less to the perversenes of so many *Errours*. To which I answer: Had I to do with none but them, who exclude all action of our free reception from the donation of *Faith*, or imagine that Eternal Salvation is in good earnest promised to *fewer* than it is outwardly offered, it would be suitable to handle these matters in this place more largely. But now forasmuch as not a few of the *Reformed* count those Errours, it

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would crofs the design of my Discourse to digress and expatiate very far. It shall suffice to have touched a *few*, and those not of the best Arguments for Opinion, but such as first occur at present. In the first place therefore we must chuse one of these twain, either to imagine that eternal Salvation is upon condition of Faith really promised unto all, to whom it is *preached* and *offered*; or that God offers that to certain men in *word* and *tongue*, which he hath decreed not to perform in *deed* and *truth*. Whosoever shall make choice of the latter, I intreat them that they would invent a *new name* for this thing, or confess it under the old name, to be *Hypocrisy*, that is, *guileful dissimulation* and *deceit*, what they imprudently ascribe to the most High God. But I have little to do with such as had rather God should be taxed and convinced of evil dissembling, than themselves of *Errour*: and therefore I lay this first ground of my Answer; that God is *faithful*, & willing seriously to give *Eternal Happiness* to whomsoever he offereth the same by the Preaching of the Gospel, unless men themselves be wanting to their duty. But he hath excluded none of those, to whose ears the voice of so joyful a Message cometh, desiring to gather even those that are *unwilling*, if so be they leave off their *unwillingness*. Now if God in the preaching of the *Gospel* hath promised *eternal Salvation* promiscuously to all who desire to attain it, he hath also promised a *means* tending to this end, which are on his part necessarily required. For he would be ridiculous, who should promise to a Begger that he would presently give him an Alms, and in the mean time be careless, yea unwilling to put his hand to his Purse, that he may reach out what he hath promised, especially if the Beggar can receive that Alms no other way than by his reaching of it out. Nor can he be said truly to promise any thing, who reserveth to himself a free power to bestow something, without which, what he hath promised can by no means be *received* and acquired. Far be it from us to have so impious a thought towards God, as that we should suspect any evil concerning the reality of his words. To whomsoever he hath promised any thing, he hath truly and sincerely promised it, nor will he circumvent any ones credulity with any slights and put-offs. Nothing drove him to the Indulgence of so great a benefit, but his own *Good Will* towards Mankind. Wherefore he is favourable to his own Gifts, and leaveth no Impediment to them, so that now nothing can be wanting on his part to the *attainment* of them, which he doth not willingly impart to all. Whereby it cometh to pass that the Gift of Faith, and whatsoever God conferreth to the office of *Believers*, although it be, like the very Salvation it

self,

self, *free* and *voluntary*, and no ways deserved, yet it is denyed to none, who having heard the *Conditions* of the *New-Covenant*, doth willingly assent to them, and is not wanting to himself in so great mercy of God: which I would also have understood concerning *all Spiritual Gifts*, without which his Promise cannot be acquired. For I will not deny that there are some, to the promiscuous bestowing whereof he hath ingaged his Faith to none; which lying out of the direct road that leadeth to the Kingdom of Heaven, are not pertinent to the thing in hand. But the Conditions which are on Gods part required to the nature of the *New-Covenant*, are already, or shall certainly be fulfilled by God: all that remaineth is, that the other party will be mindful of so holy a stipulation, and both *believe* and *obey* this *Covenant*. Which latter, since it may agree to this sort of men, whereof we speak, as hath been made evident from the precedent Discourse, what is there lacking unto them, being comprised in this transaction of God with Men, to the full Freedom and Property of all the Gifts and Promises? For the *Errours of the Understanding*, especially in things not concerning the very nature of the *Covenant*, cannot hinder them from *reaping* the fruit thereof, in that (as we have already shewn) the knowledge of those thidgs is out of the *Conditions* of the *Covenant*, (that is *lively Faith* and *Obedience*) and therefore may be absent and depraved, whil'st in the mean time those *Conditions* remain intire. But of these things we will more largely treat in the ensuing Chapter.

CHAP. V.

That nothing but Disobedience and Unbelief exclude a Man from Eternal Salvation; and that such as erre are free from these. Whether bare Errours of the Understanding damn a Man.

WHat it is lawful for Almighty God to do towards Mankind, is questioned by none, that is not ignorant of his *absolute* Dominion. What he is willing and wont to do, and how he ordereth and guideth his Commands, and the whole *Common-wealth* of the World, with Rewards and Penalties, is a thing right worthy to be taken into consideration. Certainly we are all born in a Kingdom, which is by the Goodness of the most high God made so mild and pleasant to us, that all the sweetness of *Liberty*, is sordid in comparison thereof. But he sheweth himself a Father, in stead of a Lord and Prince, unto a

great part of Men, of which alone we will at present discourse. For we who have heard the voice of his Promises, are all called from the meanness of our Rank to the Condition of the *Divine Adoption*. To enjoy so great felicity as it is *happy*: so to miss it, is very wretched and calamitous. It therefore very much concerneth men, to foresee by what steps they may be tumbled down from so great a height. And they who have already got up so high, that they have a hope of *Eternal Salvation* upon the *Conditions* of the *New-Covenant*, cannot be pulled down from their station but by *Unbelief* and *Disobedience*. For since in this last *Covenant* nothing is required of us besides a *lively Faith*, concerning which we have formerly spoken, certainly we can by no other means violate the *Holy Engagement* of that Compact, than if we become destitute of that very *Faith*, which cannot be done without the crime of manifest *Disobedience*. For it is enjoyned and commanded us, unless we had rather *perish*. And what else is *Faith* than *Obedience to God under a certain hope and confidence of his Promises*? As, *Abraham* being called, obeyed by *Faith*, Heb. 11. 8. Wherefore if this one Rock of *Disobedience* be avoided, we have no cause to fear the *Shipwrack* of our *Salvation*. It now remaineth to be considered, whither *bare Errours* of the Mind are *Disobedience*. That they are not so, is even from hence apparent; because they consist in the mistaking of the Understanding, but *this* in the *pravity* of the Will. Again, since God regardeth not the actions themselves, but the *mind* of the *Agents*, who seeth not, that they who desiring from their hearts to obey, yet through *Errour* and *Imprudence* do not so, cannot be justly accused of *Disobedience*? A Servant doth not refuse his Service, if not rightly apprehending his Master's Will, he fulfilleth it according to his understanding; much less may he be punished for *Disobedience*, and that with eternal Punishment. Nor doth God so much regard the effect, as the *decree* of our Counsel. And if you look to the event of the thing, neither did *Abraham* indeed obey God, commanding to sacrifice his Son *Isaac*, yet did he obey in his heart and mind. For he was *willing* to obey God, and did all he could, being prohibited by the Angel to do the rest, *Gen.* 22. Suppose it be commanded that we believe the true Explication of the Holy Trinity. Such as *simply erre*, do not indeed obey this Precept, for they dissent from such as are *Orthodox*, yet do they obey in their Mind and Heart, because they are willing to believe, and do believe all that which they think to be true, although they do not hit in all things the genuine sense of that which is true. And so they do what they are able, being hindred by Ignorance from doing

more.

more. But you will say, *that Ignorance* is gross and affected. I excuse not that which is *affected*, such as was in them, who whil'st the Apostles were living, or their Successours, did erre willingly, and of set purpose. For this was meer *Malice*. But they who after so great darkness had bespread the Church, do not discern the *rising Light* from counterfeit torches, cannot be said to sin out of malice and through their own Fault, as shall also hereafter be more largely handled. But what if it hath been shewn that it is *not commanded*, nor pertaineth to the Nature of our Faith and Obedience? Shall they presently be disobedient, who do not fully understand a *Mystery*, which is no where commanded to be fully understood? In short, whether they, who are called *Socinians*, do sin out of a bare Errour of Mind, we shall see hereafter. It is sufficient for me at present to evince, that *bare errours* of Mind are not punished by God with *eternal Punishment*, under the *New Covenant*. Elegant is that of *Bernard*, *Nothing burns in Hell, but our own Will*. For it only is capable of receiving the filthiness of Sin: for which in the whole Universe there hath been no place, unless God had left to intelligent Creatures, a free and entire will. Unless (I say) God had discharged the Will from all condition of servitude, all proof of *Vertue* had perished together with the license of sinning. Although very many had rather acknowledge God the *Author of Sin*, than the bounteous giver of this Liberty. Of which Liberty, notwithstanding it is an evident sign, that we abuse it alone to the license of sinning: so that the failing of our *Understanding* deservedly seemeth worthy of commiseration and pardon, whereas the pravity of our *Will* deserveth hatred and Punishment. It is therefore no wonder if God punisheth *this* rather than the *other*, with *eternal destruction*; because in *this* there is place for *guilt*, in the other only for *Imbecility*. But he never punished Imbecility and Ignorance for *Contumacy*, especially with extream and everlasting Punishment. Likewise in the Law of *Moses*, whereof he was so severe an exactor, as that he ratified the reverence of one Ceremony with the blood of a Man that went to gather sticks, *Numb.* 15. Yet did he leave Pardon for *Errour*, and a refuge for *Ignorance*, and that in the most grievous Crimes, which concern the Life and Safety of a Man. The rigour of the *Mosaick* Law pardoneth his offence who killed a man unawares, and granteth him a repeal after the death of the *High Priest*. And why should not also the lenity of the *Christian Covenant* absolve the Fault of such as erre, after the death of Christ our *High Priest*, whose Yoke is sweet and burden

den light, and who refuseth not to disburthen and ease us of the load of our sins? who hath left on Record in the latter end of his Testament, how worthy of Pardon he accounted *Errours*, whil'st in the cruel nick of his death he prayed for those that erred, *Luke* 23. Indeed to pray for them who *sin unto death*, it is not lawful: nor would the Lord ever have done *that* amidst the sacrilegious boldness of so great a Crime, had he not taken pity on their unhappy Ignorance. *Forgive them*, saith he. For what reason? Because *they know not what they do*. Now if in the ignorance of so great a *Murder* there remained, even in our Saviours Judgment, some place for Pardon, shall we, with our Censures damn to eternal Punishment the meer clouds of the Mind, and harmless Ignorance? But you will say, shall we hold that *Ignorance* and *Errours* are never punished with everlasting Destruction? What shall become of the Souls of so many thousand *Infidels*? what of those barbarous *Brasilians*, and others of that sort? The greatest part whereof have not had so much as a suspition touching God and Christ. Shall we say that these shall be punished for *Contumacy*, who know not any Law, from whose obedience they may revolt? Shall not the Ignorance of God and Christ in them undergo everlasting Punishment? In the first place, I deny that they are in any sort punished, to whose ears the sound of the Saving Doctrine never came, and say, that they are only left in that wretched condition, to which they were liable by their very *Birth*. For inasmuch as the Punishment of our *first Parent* derived the most wretched state of eternal Death to his Posterity, God might according to his Wisdom and good pleasure exempt whom he would from this misery, leaving the rest in the same. For who shall prescribe a Law to his absolute power? or set bounds to his Clemency? Those therefore, to whom he hath revealed his Law, he punisheth as *Rebels*, unless they obey, not with any new kind of Punishment (especially after Death) but only leaving them in their miserable state together with the rest. Others to whom he hath not vouchsafed so great a Benefit, he leaveth indeed in the same state, but doth not *therefore* punish. For the reason of eternal Death, as it is to be called a Punishment, consisteth not in the appointment of a new Punishment, but in a certain ademption of the Divine Grace, which might *free* them out of the servitude of the old Punishment; which certainly is not taken away from them, to whom it was never offered. But some one will reply, Why should those wretched Ignorants be in the same Condition with the *Impious* and *Disobedient*? As if God were

unjust

unjust towards *those*, because he useth Clemency towards *these*. Doth the Lord of the Vineyard do wrong to the Labourers, when he recompenseth the unequal merits of sundry Persons with one reward, not by taking somewhat away from them that were more deserving, but only by adding somewhat to them that were less deserving? *Mat.* 20. But if something may be added to their *Reward*, who are less deserving, without wrong to those who are more deserving; something also may be taken away from their punishment, who are more deserving, without wrong to them who are less deserving. Suppose that one hath promised liberty to *Titius* his Captive upon a certain condition, without promising any thing to *Sejus*. *Titius* for his Contumacy loseth the Reward, receiving nothing from his Master, but remaining Captive and miserable together with *Sejus*. Can *Sejus* now complain, that he being innocent, endureth the same things with *Titius* who was disobedient? *Titious* may rather acknowledge the clemency of his Master, who would content himself with the meer redemption of the Reward. As therefore innocent *Sejus* is not punished by his Master, although he be left in the same misery with guilty *Titius*: So neither shall the ignorant *Brasilians* be hereafter punished by not receiving that which was never promised to them. These may rather ponder on the grievous Punishment of their Contumacy, who see their Salvation, aud pine away for having forsaken it. We have, I suppose, shewn sufficiently, that such Ignorants, whereof we speak, are *not punished*. But if we grant that they also are punished, shall they be presently punished for their Ignorance? As if that Ignorance were that which ought to be punished, and is not it self rather a certain Punishment. Who knoweth not that God oftentimes avengeth *Wickedness* and *Crimes* with *Errours*. Who would not reckon such Ignorance amongst the horrid Punishments of God? This therefore will remain to be enquired further, for *what causes* he hath punished them with so great blindness? But who hath known the thoughts of the Lord? Or who hath been his Counsellor? There is no cause why any one should fish this Secret out of me, but that I certainly know that God proceedeth slowly and unwillingly to Punishment, and that every one is undoubtedly the Author of his own Destruction. Of all those that were wicked, and included under Sin, the most High God might take pity on *some*, and punish others. So that the cause of this Punishment should, as it seemeth, be sought for, not in the *Ignorance*, but the *Wickedness* of men, and in the special good-pleasure of the wise God. Let us proceed further. Suppose those barbarous *Brasilians* to be

punished for *Ignorance*. What is this to *our Errours*? Their Ignorance taketh away all *Faith*, *Religion*, and *Piety*. We speak of bare *Errours* of the Mind, which are so far from weakening *Faith* or *Religion*, that they ought, under the Penalty of everlasting destruction, to be free from all contagion of Wickedness. Finally, admit that the *Brasilians* are punished for the bare Ignorance of their *Mind*, (which notwithstanding we do not grant) shall we therefore say that the same Ignorance is punished by God with so grievous and bitter a punishment in our erronicus ones? The punishment of those doth infinitely differ from the punishment of these. It is an easie matter to lose such things as the Mind with a flattering hope *never promised* to it self. The *Reward* of Eternal Life is not promised to them, no *hope* of Immortality given them, no *taste* of everlasting joy offered to them: they never endeavoured to enter in thorow the strait Gate; to deny themselves; they have not attempted to bear their *Cross*; to follow their Saviour thorow the afflictions of this World. But the greatest part of them who erre through the bare Imbecility of their wit, have omitted nothing to the most certain hope of Salvation, and to all the toyl of a *pious life*, and to the tolerance of Christ's Cross. Shall we imagine that these shall for their meer *Ignorance*, and the *mistakes* of their Understanding, be discarded from the forethought and foretasted expectation of eternal Joy? Shall we think that their labours shall be in vain, and their *Hope* and *Faith* vanish into smoak? Certainly this would be a most wretched condition, and not to be compared with that prnishment of those *Barbarians*. So that it can at no hand seem probable to any man, who setteth before his eyes the *infinite Grace* and *Mercy* of God, especially under the *New-Covenant*, that such *Ignorance* should have so severe a Punishment inflicted on it.

CHAP. VI.

That the things necessary to be known unto Salvation, are few, and very simple, and easie to be understood by the simplest. Such is not the common Doctrine touching the Trinity.

THere are not wanting some, amongst so many *Families* of *Christians* who imagine certain particular men, whom they call *Reprobates*, to be by Name excluded from the Heavenly Inheritance; yet do the Opinions

Opinions of almost all dissenting Parties herein agree, that the way to Salvation is before hand shut up and obstructed to *no sort* of men. And indeed, not without good reason. For since they are all equal in the sight of the most High God, and no mans Dignity exempteth him out of the condition of the rest, there is no respect of Persons with God, no regard of Eminency. He viewetb not the minds of men thorow those Coverings of the Body, or thorow the Dress and Ornament of the outward Fortune, but naked and sequestred from all disguises; and therefore the condition, which is for the most part without the verge of the Man himself, ought to difference none before him. As for the Counsel therefore of the great God, all are alike destinated to Eternal Happines, whether they be Men or Women, Young or Old, clad in *Scarlet*, or course *Wool*; having so much Land, that they cannot count it, or having no Land to count; in short, whether they be born to Rule, or Servitude; exercise Liberal or Manual Arts, all are promiscuously and in the same degree called to that Heavenly Inheritance. How few of all these can penetrate into those abstruser *Secrets* of sublime Doctrines? And therefore by the most wise Counsel of God, the Heads necessary to Salvation are so ordered, that they may, without any pains, be understood and comprehended by all. Howbeit that Doctrine, touching which the present Discourse is intended, is so *intricate* and hard, and doth so far surpass the apprehension of the simpler sort, that very few of them can promise Salvation to themselves, if it be prejudicial to any one to have a *Misunderstanding* of these things. For the Question is not concerning the *Holy Trinity*, which all confess and adore, even they who are nick-named *Samosatenians*; but touching the Differences of *Essences* and *Persons*, touching the Communication of Properties, touching those Mysteries which no man ever saw, nor sufficiently understood. Hence things rise up so high above our Imbecility, and so great a crop of Thorns and Briars springeth up when they begin once to be discussed, that Nature seldom produceth so happy a Wit, as can in good earnest rid himself out of that Brake. If any one of the duller sort (and who seemeth *acute* enough for so subtle things) stick in those Briars, why should we Impute that to his *Wickedness*, which is due to the *weakness* of his Wit? The very sublimity of the things, argueth their difficulty, as also the Excellency of the *Object*, which never was, never will be comprehended by the Mind of Man. And therefore not long after the Apostles time, a great bickering about these things

disturbed the whole World, and did so exercise the Wits of the Fathers, that after so many calls and Councils, neither did all agree with one another, not every one with himself. By so much easier a task it is to search the Majesty of God, than *comprehend* it. Which curiosity, how fatal it proved to the World, let us believe the Complaint of *Hilary*, who pronounceth the Bishops of *France*, *happy*, in that they had neither forged nor received, not known any other *Confession* than that old and most simple one, which had from the Age of the Apostles been received in all Churches. O that we had rather be happy with those *French* Bishops, than by being *over-wise*, disturb the Quiet of the Church, or banish out of Heaven such Souls as are incapable of so great Mysteries! How many men *truly pious* and simple shall you find, who are not able to maintain and defend their own *Opinion*, though sometimes true? If these happen to doubt of the truth, or through imprudency to slip in such Matters, shall they presently be excluded from the Entrance both of Heaven and the Church, as Enemies of God and Christ? What shall the wretches do, whilst oftentimes they hang in suspense between a great shew of *probability* on both sides? And why should not the knowledge of such things, as are altogether requisite unto Salvation, be as obvious to the *Simple* as to learned Wits? Hath God paved an easier way to Salvation for the *Learned* and *Ingenious*, than for others? Nor is it very material, that the ruder sort may apprehend by the teaching of the more Learned, what they perhaps of themselves cannot attain unto. For since among the Learned themselves there are so many *Controversies*, either the ruder sort shall judge of them by their *own* understanding, which is all one (for 'tis as hard to determine between the Arguments on both sides, as between true and false Opinions) or shall hand over head follow the authority of others. But if the choice of the true Opinion exceedeth their ability, so that they are altogether inforced to follow others without any premised deliberation; what fault of theirs will it be, when they are mistaken? Therefore they shall either be punished *guiltless* for the fault of others, or if they perish *guilty*, their only offence will be this, namely, that they are somewhat *dull*; which is ridiculous. For let us suppose, what often cometh to pass, that there are certain simple men of an innocent Life, and who according to the power of their mortality, live *piously* and *devoutly*: let us also suppose what often falleth out, that there are *Learned* and *Ingenious* men, but overwhelmed with sins and and trespasses. In both, perhaps God may find just cause of Punishment: but he setteth not so high a estimate

mate on *Wit*, as to deal more severely with *better Men*, only for their rudeness, than with the worst of men, and such as by their very Ingratitude for his Gifts provoke his vengeance. But he should deal more severely with *better* men, were a certain and infallible way to Salvation quite shut up to them for the dulness of their Wit; and only an uncertain and slippery one, depending on another's wit or piety, left them. And if, on the the contrary, wicked men, so they be ingenious, have always, (if they please) a priviledge to go thorow the right and saving Path. But you will say, God is bound to none, and when he findeth in both a cause of just severity, though not equal, he may according to his own good pleasure, prosecute his right in those, and pardon these their greater sins. I answer: What God may do is not here so much questioned, as what he *will, and is wont to do*. And therefore though we should grant, that he may do this; yet would it not as yet appear, that he will, and is wont to do so. For God may do many things towards Men, without Impeachment to his Justice, which otherwise his *wonted Mercy* seemeth not to permit. But would not a respect of Persons be by this means apparently ascribed unto God, if before him *Learned* Men should be in a better condition, than *Simple* Ones? And yet notwithstanding he is wont to reveal his Mysteries, not to the wise of the World, but to the Simple and Ignorant, as the face of the *Primitive Church* witnesseth, which had very few *Learned* Men: which very thing evinceth the Condition of simple Men in point of Religion, to be, if not better, yet at least equal to that of the *Learned*. I am sorry to dwell longer on a thing so evident. For these things cannot be obscure to any one but him, who being puffed up with a vain confidence of himself, and his Knowledge, hath quite evaporated and breathed out all *Charity* and Mildness of Christian Forbearance. And therefore such as erre are oftentimes by us accused of *Wickedness*, not that they themselves erre grievously, but because they think us to erre grievously. Our *Pride* may seek what Pretences she pleaseth, yet doth she for the most part plead her *own* Cause; and a great part of those that erre are condemned and anathematized not so much for their own ignorance, as for their *dissent* from us.

CHAP. VII.

That there is not in this Life a perfect Knowledge of God, and of Divine Mysteries, but in the other Life; and that Faith, Hope, *and* Charity *are Sufficient to Salvation.*

IF in the business of our Salvation a difference were made between the very work of our Felicity and such *means* as tend thereunto, we should esteem fewer things as necessary to be known, and a far easier course might be taken to repair *Concord* in the *Church*. Whereas now, whilst we confound the *means* with the *end*, it cometh to pass, that in a preposterous Order we will have that which was first in the *Intention*, to be also first in the *Execution*, when notwithstanding the means do in their nature so follow the end, as to go before it in time. What is it to which the desire of the robiest minds aspire? Even the pleasure of eternal Joy, which Man's Mind cannot so much as conceive without the exact Knowledge of God. But that contemplation, happy even to Envy, awaiteth us in the Heavens; nor can the narrowness of our earthly temper in this frailty comprehend it. As therefore he would be ridiculous, who should hope for the fruit of Soveraign Happiness in this Life; so are we also seized with a very foolish honour, whilst in this *time* of our Mortality we require of all the Saints for Heaven, a *perfect Knowledge* of God's Nature: which is not a taste or handsel of our felicity, but the *very top* and complement thereof. If the capacity of our Understanding doth (as hath been said) in vain attempt to comprehend this fully on the Earth, it is fit that we, together with the Apostle, (1 Cor. 13.) Knowing and prophesying in part, expect the *Perfection* that is to come. But with what Spaces shall we circumscribe that wandring and *imperfit Knowledge*? It is the safest way to fix those Limits thereunto, which the very nature of the *New-Covenant* hath appointed. Namely, that we chiefly and necessarily inculcate on all, only that Knowledge of God and Christ, without which those things cannot consist, which are required of us by vertue of the *New-Covenant*. Of which sort are a *firm Confidence* placed in God and his Christ, together with a *Hope* of his *Promises*, and *perfit Charity*. All these things are easily consistent with those Mistakes about the subtle search into the Nature of God and Christ. Moreover the greatest difficulty in such dissentions, is for the most part

wont

wont to arise about the State of our Saviour, before he repaired the *Lapsed* Condition of Men. Howbeit, if we make a true Estimate of the matter, although this Mystery of his Eternity be true and altogether Divine, yet doth it not properly belong to us, to whom he hath presented and revealed himself a *Mediator* in a humane Nature and Condition only. So that they are altogether worthy of excuse, who see and look upon him only in that part, wherein he shewed himself to Mankind. For as they lose not the Rewards of a *Covenant*, who do not exactly know and comprehend his *Nature*, with whom, and by the entermise of whom, they enter into league, so that they know both so far forth, as the reason of the *Covenant* and common utility requireth. So neither from they exclusible from Heaven, who in the Knowledge of God and Christ the *Mediator*, want nothing to the reason and observance of the *New-Covenant*, although they rise not up to the sublimer Contemplation of both. Especially since the greatest part of them, who at this day recede from the common sense of the Church in so great a matter, are not out of any *rashness* so persuaded touching the Son of God, but rather out of a *pious fear*, least they should detract from the Father somewhat of his Honour. Wherein if they unwittingly offend against the Son, out of Love to the Father, (so that Improbity mingle not it self with their Errour) it seemeth very credible, that the *Son* will, for the very *Love of the Father*, forgive them this Errour. For he gave a notable proof of his Meekness, when he prayed for his *Ignorant Murtherers*, as we also did before hint. What think we, will he not do for the Love of the *Father*, who for the *Love of Men* forgave so great an Injury to his Enemies? Now if he out of Love to Mankind, doubted not to assume the Form of a Servant, and really to endure extream Disgraces, certainly he will bear with the *Errours* of Men, who do not conceive worthily enough of his Majesty and Dignity, especially that which is past. Will he, who for the sakes of Men did of his own accord debase himself to the *lowest Condition*, punish them for this very thing, namely, because they out of Ignorance think more meanly of his *Condition* than is fit? Especially, when he himself by his Debasement, did in a manner give occasion of such Ignorance. Certainly it is incredible, that he, who of his own accord underwent for the Sins of Men a reproachful kind of Death, will not pardon to humane weakness a simple Opinion, that derogates something from his antient Excellency, if so be the *Errour* be harmless, and removed from all

Sin

Sin of Malice. More might be said on this occasion; but neither is it my intention to say all things, and what hath been spoken, will suffice cautious Judgments. As for *Heady* Dispositions, we may sooner *wish* than *hope* to bring them from their inbred Prejudices. Now let us descend to such things as are more special.

CHAP. VIII.

A General Apology for the Socinians, *that they are not of such a Persuasion out of Ambition, Avarice, Pleasure, or Superstition, nor offend out of any Malice, but only out of the Care of their Salvation.*

AY me! what *Contumacy* is this, and scorning to obey, that we Men depart from our heavenly Allegiance in nothing sooner, than *that* which hath most acurately been enjoyned and prescribed? Doth that unhappy *Exile* of Heaven, soliciting the Earth to a Society of Rebellion, tempt us in that part chiefly, where he may make us most guilty of *Treason*? Or rather, did the divine Providence more strictly command that, wherein he most suspected our Obedience? Whatsoever it be, certainly the more frequently mutual *Love* and *Good-will* is enjoyned us in the sacred Oracles, the more obstinately do we refuse it. And (which is the more to be lamented) we follow them as Guides herein, who ought at no hand thus to go before us, I mean such Teachers of Religion, who being co-zeal'd with the zeal of *Inhumane Fury*, make it a part of our Duty to *hate* Dissenters. A great part of them beginneth to hate the *Persons* before the *Vices*, and (which is a thing very unjust) under a pretence of the *publick Cause*, they exercise *private Hatred*. Yea, further, to an inexpiable and most hateful War, the bare *name* of Parties is sufficient: and in a preposterous Order, the Judgment here followeth hatred and Enmity, as elsewhere it doth *Love*. Besides, it is prejudical to the *Truth* to have been uttered or defended by such as erre; nor is Virtue valued at her worth in them, who have been once *blasted* with the suspition and prejudice of *Errours*. No *Honesty*, guilty of the least *Heresy*, is safe in the Church of *Rome*: not is the Honesty of a *Catholick* more gently dealt withal amongst *Protestants*, who being themselves also divided into sundry *Factions*, with proud determinations denounce *Heaven* or *Hell* to one another. There is

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no remembrance of Mortality; no pardon to mistaking, any where. Although you offend not in your *Manners*, yet is it a capital Offence to trip in the Understanding of Divine Matters. Yet hath the publick hatred of the World more easily conspired against no sort of men than against those who commonly pass under the Name of *Socinians*, or *Photinians*. Certainly an *unhappy Race* of Men, and amidst so many Injuries and Reproaches, honest in a manner *gratis*. For neither do I excuse the *Errours* which they hold. The thing, I wonder at is, this, How men so distant from all ambition and avarice, and innocent in all the parts of their Life, should be so grievously mistaken. To aim at high Matters is the undoing of very many Wits, born and framed to the best things. But this vice, arising from the desire of Glory, hath there no place, (if other lusts be absent) where Ambition findeth not room enough for her swelling to expatiate in. For what man, being well in his wits, would promise to himself a *Name of Renown* amongst the most contemned and universally hated part of the ignoble Vulgar? Who would seek after the Rays of an illustrious fame amidst the Darkness of Obscurity, who might find it in the light and Sun shine? As we see very many of them might do, whom neither the splendor of their Birth, nor their Wit and Learning exempteth from a voluntary debasement. Nor can you justly charge them with *Avarice*, a great part of whom doth generously despise all means of growing *Rich*; and you shall hardly find any where, either *poorer* men, or such as by the Rule of their *Sect*, are necessitated to give more than they. There remaineth *Superstition*, whose timerous nature always condemneth anothers Liberty, in that which she her self doth with a scrupulous Religion refuse. Certainly *Superstition* is either banished from amongst them, or hath there put off that which was in her nature most odious, since they in all their Doctrines *so dissent* from others, as that they exclude none either from eternal Salvation, or from *Brotherly Communion*, but such an one as is a Patron of manifest *Vice*. Which very Carriage wipeth away even the least suspition of *Pride*, which never debaseth her self unto so great modesty, as not to prescribe that truth, which she arrogateth to her self, to be held and observed by all others almost under a Form: so that I am utterly unable to find out *the Cause*, why they should expose themselves to the cruel hatred of all, and to dangers, unless it be an ardent desire to please God, and study of true Piety. In which regard they are worthy of more Pardon, if any disaster befall them in the search of sublime things. For indeed I cannot apprehend what it is that inflameth us with so implacable

cable prejudice against them, when neither the sweetness of *Fame*, nor the spur of *Rithes*, nor the allurements of a *dissolute Lifu*, but only the solicitous care of their Salvation, hath call them into these straits. We ought rather to favour the Wretches, and reach forth a saving Right-Hand to them, even *against their will*. Whereas now on the contrary, we *reject* them suing for our favour, and had rather hate and abominate than *instruct* them in a friendly manner? But by what right, or for what demerit of theirs? Is it because they defend things, which they conceive to be true, with so great prejudice to their Honour and Security? What? would we have them sacrifice their Faith and Conscience on the pleasures of others? Or is it because they think those things to be *true*, which are *false*? Truly we are very injurious to mortality, if we suppose the Errours and Failings of our Mind to be Crimes. You will say, *They sin of set purpose*: and fall not casually, but by a voluntary slip. But who told you so? Or who hath discovered to you their inimate Counsels? Certainly not *Charity*, which is an Enemy to evil Surmises, but bitterness and malignity of Spirit, which is apt to make a sinister Construction of another's meaning. Although they had no evident proof of their Innocency, yet in a doubtful matter, and such as is known only to the *Judge of Hearts*, it became us not to make any sad decree against them. How much less can they be condemned, when there appeareth nothing that might invite and drive them to so wretched and dangerous malice? We should at least here make use of that notable Saying of *Piso's*, *For what Advantage is this done?* For if they be neither seized with a longing after Honours and Riches, nor with an Itch of Pleasures, nor can have any hopes of earthly Solace, and if they conform their Life to the Prescript of that most *Holy Law*, where lyeth the Incitement to so great Improbity, as that they should purposely procure to themselves so many troubles, together with eternal Destruction?

CHAP. IX.

An Answer to the Objection *about rejecting the Consent of the Church, for the Authority of the Scripture only.*

BUt you will say, That they have been so daring, as to question a Mystery for so many Ages since received by *all* the Christian World with great applause, and venerable for its very Antiquity, and ra-

ratified by the authority of so many Holy *Fathers* and *Councils*: and so are come to the very height of wickedness, in attempting to discuss with sacrilegious curiosity such things as ought to be believed. The reprehension then is this, that they have *begun* to make a doubt of so certain a thing. But what? Is it unlawful to busie your wit about a thing of undoubted Truth, that after a more strict examination, you may the sooner impetrate assent from your self? Certainly it is a disparagement to the Truth, if we suppose her to be afraid of Men's Judgments. For neither is it unbecoming her to plead for her self at the Bar of *Reason*, that she may bravely overcome, and draw the very Judge to her side: whereas if she decline the Tryal of this Court, she suffers not a little in the confidence of her cause. For though we may not enquire into the Truth of the *Divine Oracle*, yet we both may and ought into the true meaning thereof: and they seem Slanderers, who say that the *Socinians* believe not the words of the *Scripture*, because they doubt of the received sense. But what if they seem also to have just causes of *doubting*? For they conceive that the *Holy Fathers*, and the consent of so many Ages, do add more Dignity and Veneration, than *Stress* to the Doctrine of the *Trinity*. How well grounded this conceit is, I dispute not. However, certain it is, that they are not the first who have charged the publick authority of the Church, and the consent of many *Synods* and *Ages*, with the Suspition of very great Crimes. For since they see the foresaid authority in many other things of great moment, not only *Accused*, but also convicted of *Falshood*, what so hainous Crime have they committed, who dare not entrust their Faith and Opinion of Divine Things unto her? For of sixteen *Ages*, the *twelve latter* cannot warrant many things to the greatest part of *Christians*. It cannot be denyed, that the *Socinians* going further than others, do also reject the consent of the *four* former, but especially of the *third* and *fourth* ages. For since the Truth hath found little assurance in humane authority for so many Ages of the lowest antiquity, they thought that their Opinions were to be squared *only* by the Rule of the Holy Scripture. Wherein truly they could not erre so greatly, but that they had a far greater cause of erring. For what could the Faith of the Church, being once suspected, ratifie to them? How could they know that the *Christian* World hath groaned under the Darkness of Errours *no longer* than for ten or twelve *Ages*? Or that those antient times had any priviledge above the following Ones, so that they could not erre? They saw them to be Men, yea, such men as were,

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alas! defiled for a great part with *vices* and *crimes*. Nor could they be ignorant of the factions amongst the *Nicene* Fathers, nor of their evident ambition, nor of the *evil arts* of sundry others, nor of the shameful *Errours* of men, otherwise most holy. And though it were to be held, that about the three hundredth year of Salvation, the Church did still retain the primitive Truth, yet in so many dissentions and so many adverse Councils, they judged, that at least the choice of the truer Opinion did pertain to themselves. In chusing which, they ought not to follow the Judgment of the successive Church, which had been already justly condemned in many Points of Faith, but the *infallible* Rule of the holy Scripture. For how could the Church warrant unto them the opinion of others, when she was not able to make good her own. Besides, they called to mind the *Genius* of that age, and the dispositions of those Fathers, concerning whom that great man *Justus Lipsius* in our age wrote, *That many did then so put on Christ by an outward Profession, that in their Minds they did not put off* Plato. And therefore they not without cause suspected, that in many heads of Doctrine, *plain words* were wrested to *forrain & Philosphical senses*, whilst the Fathers did with ingenious Comments tack the mysteries of their *Philosophy* to the *Word of God*, that they might not seem to have learned in vain. For what should be the cause, say they, that touching the received Explication of the Holy Trinity, *Plato* and *Trismagistus* speak *more clearly* than the sacred Scripture? Or what reason should there be, why the Scripture should more timerously and obscurely deliver *so holy a Mystery*, than the foresaid *Philosphers*? These and the like things, though they do not acquit them of *Errour*, yet do they clear them from the Imputation of *rashness*. For nothing is more certain, than that the Doctrine of Christ is not built on so weak a foundation, as some constitute in humane authority. Now did we heretofore wrest *these Arms* out of the hands of *Papists*, that we our selves might use them against others? Certainly it becometh not us, either to take *their* Weapons, or deliver *ours* up to them; but when we are summoned to the Tribunal of the *Holy Scriptures only*, we ought not to yield this praise to the Adversaries, that they should seem to hope better than we concerning the *Equity* and *Power* of so great a Judge.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

An Answer to three other Objections: a Comparison of Calvin's Doctrine touching Fatal Predestination, with the Doctrine of others.

BUt it will be further *objected*, that the *Socinians* impiously contradict the manifest words of the sacred Scripture, and scornfully reject the clear Truth coming in upon them. To which I answer, That whatsoever pains and travel they undertake in this Business, is employed, not against the *Holy Trinity*, (as they are unjustly defamed) nor against the Sacred Scripture, but against the humane Explications of both. Hence we may see that they willingly assent and give credit to all the Sacred Oracles touching this matter, only rejecting certain Interpretations and Forms, sprung up certain ages after: They believe they are according to the Command of Christ, *to be baptized into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*, Mat. 28. They believe *those three sacred Witnesses in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit*, 1 Joh. 5. They acknowledge, *that in the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was a God*, Joh. 1. Yea, such a one, *to whom all Power in Heaven and Earth was given*; as he speaketh of himself, *Mat.* 28. It would be tedious to reckon up all the Scripture-Testimonies of this kind, to which they give credence without any exception. Those hard and subtil Opinions concerning the *Essence* and *Person* of God, concerning the communication of *Properties*, and others of that batch, they either understand not, or think them repugnant to the simple and plain Word of God. Give us leave, say they, to be ignorants of such things as are believed with danger. In these so subtil and thorny Explications, if they, after the manner of Men chance to *err*, shall they presently be termed the Enemies of God and Christ? Shall there be found no pardon for an Errour in so great difficulty of things, no excuse for weakness? Which notwithstanding we ingeniously seek, even for the greatest Crimes, though we be never so well provided of means to avoid them. Are they, who out of Ignorance and Errour violate the *Edicts* of Princes, acquitted from the Crime of Treason? and shall he that offendeth about the *Divine Oracles*, in our Opinion, have no re-

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fuge for his weakness in the mercy of the Heavenly Father? But you will reply, that their Blasphemies are horrid, wherein Impiety leaveth no place for pity; and reproachful against the Son of God, and overthrowing the Foundation of *our Faith*. To which I answer, that if there have been any amongst them of a more intemperate Tongue or Quill, they are *infamous* not only with us, but also with them. But what is here meant by the *Foundation of Faith*, I do not sufficiently perceive. It hath been abundantly evidenced before, that such *Errours* do necessarily take away neither our *Faith*, nor our *Salvation*. For it is not the Foundation of Salvation to know his *Essence*, who hath promised the Salvation to us, so that we have no impious and contumelious Opinion of him: as the ignorance of the Nature of the Promiser taketh not away the certainty of the Promise, unless he hath promised us any thing under the condition of such Knowledge. As for the knowledge of the *Father*, they therein do in a manner agree with us. They likewise adore and reverence with Divine Worship the *Son of God*, as the Author and Mediator of their Salvation, the Heir and Lord of the Universe, and the General of our *Warfare*. But you will here reply, that they deny his *Eternity*. I answer, that they, together with holy *Paul*, care not much to know any thing but *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*; and had rather, with so great an Apostle, rest in the simplicity of this Knowledge, than either with *Arius*, to ascend to *Non-entities*, or with *Athanasius* to *Co-essentialities*. As for the Honour which they give to the *Holy Spirit*, the greatness thereof appeareth, in that they scarce distinguish him from the Supream *Father*. Shall they then be said to blaspheme against these, if they be somewhat mistaken in the other Knowledge of them? Indeed many Opinions are drawn out of their Doctrines, that the wretches may be loaded with more Envy, and that by them, who whil'st they are so vigilant in other mens *Errours*, are fast asleep in their own. But if all the Chaff were to be sifted out of humane opinions, I would wish that a great part of the *Reformed Churches* would labour to defend their own Cause, before they undertake to oppose that of others: but those above all, who have from the age of *Chrysippus* recalled down to these very Times that secret and inevitable Law of *Fate*; and who hold also, that the Sins and destruction of Mankind, and finally all and singular motions and impulsions of our Will, proceed from the decree of eternal Destiny; to whom this false persuasion also seemeth to be fatal. From which Opinion, if we lay aside prejudice, more, and more shameful *Errours* will be deduced,

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than out of the Books of the *Socinians*. For which is more reproachful unto God, to hold that he is one as well in *Person* as *Essence*; or (that I may cloathe naked *Injustice* with soft words) to bring him in punishing men, for *not doing* those things, which by his own procurement were impossible? Is it more absurd to conceive that there is one *Essence* of the Father, another of the Son, than that God (I tremble to speak it) hath one thing open in his tongue, and another thing, contrary thereunto, shut up in his breast? This is reproach enough to the most High God, although we do not adde, that this dissimulation is joyned with deceit? Is the dignity of the *Holy Spirit* more traduced, whil'st he is said to be only the *Vertue* and *Power* of God; than the *Goodness* of God, whil'st he is held the *Author of Sin*? Which consequence doth also flow by a fatal and inevitable flux from that Doctrine of Fate. For he that decreed men should necessarily sin, certainly would have them sin: otherwise he would have decreed a thing against his own desire. Now he, whose *Decree* and *Will* the *event* doth immutably follow, may certainly be termed the Cause of that event, whether he affect it by himself, or by *another*. Finally, is it a greater derogation to the dignity of Christ, to deny *two Natures* in him, least we should make him two Persons, than to the Wisdom of God, to affirm that he would perswade men to that, whereto nevertheless he hath not perswaded them, namely, that he would give Salvation unto *all*, when notwithstanding he hath designed it only to a *few*? Truly, if we look more narrowly into the matter, the Doctrine of the *Socinians* touching the *Holy Trinity*, is not to be actounted so much *evil* and *impious* in its own nature, as *imperfect* and *maimed*. For it seemeth to ascribe to the *Holy Trinity* nothing false or absurd, but only to take away something that is true, namely, the *Divine Nature of Christ*, and the *proper Person* of the *Holy Spirit*. Whereas this *Doctrine* touching the fatal Predestination of particular men, laboureth not with any defect, but with manifest *pravity*. For it not only offereth Injury to God by most unworthy Calumnies, but also striketh at the Foundation of our Faith. For to omit *Security* and *Despair*, with which two *Rams* it battereth the Wall of our Piety, it wonderfully weakeneth the very *Belief* of God's Promises, whil'st it bringeth in God wickedly dissembling, the more is the grief.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

Reasons and Examples for tolerating Hereticks; and who are true Hereticks.

TO what purpose speak these things? Namely, to shew that there is no cause, why we should not think that they ought to be tolerated in the Church, whose tenets, either by themselves, or for their absurd *Consequences*, seem scarce tolerable, so that they do not wilfully ascribe some impious thing to God, and testifie their Love towards the Lord Jesus Christ, by obeying his Commandments. For although both the Patrons of the forecited Opinions did build unprofitable, yea, damnable *Tenets*, as it were *hay* and *stubble* upon our *Foundation*, which is Jesus Christ; yet, as it hath been also shewn at the beginning, the *Tenets* which they through Errour have brought in, shall be destroyed by *fire*, whil'st they themselves in the mean time (unless some other thing hinder) shall, as the Apostle testifieth, 1 *Cor.* 3. obtain *Pardon and Salvation*. Neither indeed ought we to refuse or scorn their Communion, whom God will receive into the Society of eternal happiness; nor should we hate them on earth, to whom eternal Love in Heaven is due. We are unworthy to bear the Title of God's Children, if we disdain to be their *Brethren*, whose *Father* God desireth to be. But if we be afraid of the contagion of such Errours, either in behalf of our selves, or rather of the *weaker ones*, in the first place we may not thereupon renounce brotherly Love, which we owe to them, although they erre. For we ought not to forsake a certain and clear *Duty*, least an uncertain evil should happen, nor to pursue even the most holy Ends by unlawful means. But secondly, that fear is vain. For if we have not the Truth, there is little danger to be feared from them, much less if we have it. For since they maintain their *Tenets* with no *Arms*, nor with any force, and think it not so much as lawful so to do, nor set them off with any carnal allurements, certainly the Truth can never be by them either oppressed with *force*, or overthrown with *fraud*, inasmuch as the nature of truth is such, that like to *Eagles Feathers*, she devoureth all other light plumage of Opinions, never withdrawing her self from us, unless she be tyred either with our Servitude, or Sins. Which twain being not to be

be feared by us in a modeſt liberty of diſſenting, and ſtudy of true *Charity*, what cauſe is there why we ſhould ſo warily fence our Opinions from their *Tenets*? Let us rather be poſſeſſed with a certain hope, that as earthen Veſſels being joyned with thoſe of Tin or Silver, are broken to pieces: ſo alſo if God the author of peace ſhall bring back into the Church that happy tolerance, all *falſe* Opinions fighting hand to hand with the *true*, will be daſhed to ſhivers and periſh. Otherwiſe, if we ſo much fear that mutual patience, and friendly conference, we do not think well enough concerning the goodneſs of our Cauſe. Heretofore when the dawning of *Goſpel-Light* was returned, *Luther* and his Followers would have wiſhed that they might be tolerated in the *Communion* of the *Roman* Church. But it concerned the Pope to ſecure his Darkneſs from the approach of the Morning. Again, when a diſſention was riſen up between the *Lutherans* and the Reformed, who was it that refuſed the form of agreement that was offered, but he that doubted of his Cauſe? Now alſo in the very Reformed Church it ſelf, upon the diſſention concerning *Fate*, none are more diſpleaſed with tolerance, than they that ſuſpect the truth of their *Doctrine*. Would *Errour* were ſo circumſpect in the Cradle of its Infancy, as it is provident, being once grown up. But it being blind when it is born, doth afterwards become ſharp-ſighted, foreſeeing its fate afar off, and eſchewing it, and is never more ingenious to prolong its Life, than when it is preſſed with the conſcience of its own weakneſs. But you will ſay, ſhall we acknowledge a *Heretick* even for a Brother, when the *Apoſtle*, Tit. 3. commandeth us to avoid him after two or three admonitions? Why ſhall we be more merciful than the *Holy Spirit*? Let not that Mercy turn to our Miſery, when once the Lord beginneth to require at our hands the Souls of ſo many ſeduced Innocents. Shall we not eſteem him a *Heretick*, who in ſo great a matter departeth from the ſound *Doctrine* of the Church? Do we not think our own *Doctrine* ſound? How often have they been admoniſhed both with Writings and Diſputations, and yet nevertheleſs ſtick to their Errours as to Rocks? I anſwer, Let none pleaſe himſelf ſo much, as to vie with the Apoſtolical Meekneſs. It is an incurable Member, that the Apoſtle enjoyneth to be cut off from the reſt of the Church's Body. Howbeit there may be Errour in them that undertake the Cure, and they themſelves may be overſpread with much darkneſs. For neither can the *ſound* part be always diſcerned from the diſeaſed one, and the one doth oftentimes deceive us with the Diſguiſe and Image of the other. And tho

it be never so manifest what part is entangled with a true Disease, yet doth it sometimes remain to be scanned, whether it be to be cut off, or cured with *mollifying* Remedies; for those Members only ought to suffer amputation, wherein the *Gangrene* leaves no place for a milder Medicine. Nor is the Apostle of another Mind, when he commandeth many Admonitions to be premised before *Excommunication*. And lest it should be doubtful whom he designed by the Name of a *Heretick*, he subjoyneth Arguments thereupon, which are indeed effects of the *Heretick* himself, but unto us impulsive Causes, that we may avoid him. For he saith, *That such an one is overturned, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.* And lest any should think that these are indeed impulsive Causes, but not of our fact, and our avoiding, but only of the Apostles Injunction; so that he indeed for these Causes excludeth every *Heretick* from the Communion of the Church; but yet it is not necessary for us to have respect to them, he premiseth the Participle, *Knowing*; to intimate that we also ought to know the Causes why we *discommon* any of the Citizens in that Heavenly *Common-wealth*, nor hasten rashly to such Proscriptions, but after we have certain knowledge of so great *malice* in them. And truly although the Apostle had not added this, yet did very *Charity* and the Analogy of our Religion, dictate so much unto us. For this is a great punishment, nor to be inflicted but on such as sin evidently. And forasmuch as in so great a matter no *Errour* can be little, we ought first of all to be ascertained, that the Man to be condemned is worthy of so rigid a sentence, namely, such an one, as is here painted out in his Colours. Which not belonging unto men, who go astray from the common road, out of *meer Ignorance*, or injury of the Times, what shall we do to them that make use of this exception? Shall they who in these calamitous times, in this desolation of the *Church* (being born a great while after the *Rise of Antichrist*, and not able fully to dispel the Darkness of that long Night) turn aside into By-Paths, be judged to sin out of perversity of Mind? Where now is that Royal *High-way*, thorow which the Godly may pass securely on with an unerring foot to Salvation? If it lyes in the *Authority of the Church*, she hath now for many Ages been beset with the Snares of *Antichrist*. We wonder that they are afraid of the suspected Faith of the *Church*, when they do the same after our example, and in so great danger to fear even all the things that are safe, is a point of prudence. And we still dare to upbraid them with rashness in depart-

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ing from the common Doctrine, when they seem to do it out of a just and well-grounded fear. But if this way consisteth in the *Authority of the Holy Scripture*, they do not stray from it, whil'st they, together with us, honour those Sacred Books with due Reverence. But you will say, that the right and *Orthodox sense* of the Holy Scripture is rather the only Path, that is able to bring us to the very Citadel of *Truth*. I confess that this way was heretofore worn with the publick going of *Christians*; but now, being first hidden with the springing Briars of *Antichrist*, and therefore trodden by very few, and not as yet discovered by having all the Brake cut down; & besides, called into doubt by so many intervening false Paths, it hath not as yet recovered the Name & *Nature* of a *Royal High-way*, which it had for a long time lost. And therefore the greater pardon is due unto such as deviate from the same. For neither do they erre through desparate Malice of heart, who do not always walk therein amidst so many cross-ways and turnings. Let any one reckon up to me all the Sects of *Christian-Religion*, and I will say he is a brave fellow, if he omit none. In so great a concourse of Opinions, if they have not chosen the truer, who will say, that this is rather done out of Improbity, than out of Ignorance? For by what Argument, after so many Errours have been introduced, ought the *Truth* to lie open to their view? By the unanimous consent of the Church? O unanimous consent, amidst *six hundred* different Sects! You will say, that in the Doctrine contrary unto them, the *greatest* part are *agreed*. But this is nothing, since they have also agreed in very many Errours. So that we must again seek out a priviledge for the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, whereby it came to pass, that though men erred in other points, yet could they not mistake in this. But if we suppose that they ought to examine all Opinions by the Rule of the Holy Scripture, and afterwards to chuse the truer; they have done both, save that in the latter they have not followed that which *indeed* was, but only that which they *thought* to be truer. Which certainly is an *Errour*, and no malice; nor can they be said to sin *Self-condemned* in holding such an Opinion, for which they are ready to lose their Life and Fortunes. For neither doth he condemn himself, at least in his Conscience, who in the midst of cruel tortures hopeth for *Eternal Life* from God, as the Reward of defending the Truth. Wherefore since we are not certain, that they are perverse and self-condemned, but well assured that they are not such, even from the *Death*, which they willingly undergo for their Errours; and since such Errours (as hath been before

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proved) do not subvert *Eternal Salvation*, it seemeth that they ought not to be segregated from the Communion of the Church, if they will testifie their Love towards the Lord Jesus, by obeying his Commandments.

CHAP. XII.

What Hereticks are to be Excommunicated, what not? And a fuller Apology for those who in our Age pass for Hireticks.

BY this reckoning will some say, How few *Hereticks* must be Excommunicated? Who will not invent plausible pretences for his Pravity? There is no Doctrine so *absurd* and *pestilent*, which being palliated with that Cloak of *Errour*, may not creep into the Church. To which I answer, that there is no cause why we should be sollicitous lest we should have no occasion to use this rigid Law of *Excommunion*. Would the Church had even at this day no *voluntary Rebels* against the Divine Majesty. But neither in the times of the Apostles were there men wanting, who subverted either our Faith in God, or the hope of Immortality, or the Piety and Love that is enjoyned us, and such as did not by Deductions and Consequences, but with *open-face*, as they say, vent Blasphemies and Impieties. Whose endeavour and impiety is not so obscure, but that it is apparent that they were conscious to themselves of their Pravity and Fraud. As if any one should deny the *Resurrection of the Dead*, who seeth not that such a Man, after he hath viewed the clear and certain Sentence of the holy Scripture, will be convicted in himself, although he may perhaps dissemble it? There is the same reason in the Patron of some apparant vice. All which being manifest, (for so are the *Works of the flesh*) and *manifestly forbidden*, such a man hath no starting-hole in the ambiguity or obscurity of the sacred Scripture, unless he disbelieves the same, and so overthrow all Religion. Whosoever therefore brings into the Church such *Doctrines*, as do in their own nature subvert our Salvation and Faith, they are deservedly commanded to depart together with the former, not only lest they should hurt others, but also because they themselves, as hath been shewn, are of incorrigible Malice and Perversity, and consequently, self-condemned. For a *Chirurgeon* doth not presently sear or cut off

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an infected part, because it may with its contagion, hurt the rest of the Body, but would first have that very part cured of the *Infection*; which if it doth not succeed, he then cuts it off as incurable. But those *Doctrines* that stand not within the *Boundaries* of necessity to Salvation, are such, that an errour in them, especially in this disturbed state of things, cannot be taxed of wilful pravity, nor can it either damn its Author, or exclude him from the Bosome of the Church. But some one will here object, Shall we brand with this Spiritual Censure the obstinate Maintainer of none, even the greatest *Errour*, if so be it overthrow not our Salvation? But there are many things, which though in their own nature they take not from us our Salvation, yet do they *by degrees* so undermine and weaken the same, that afterwards it falleth down of its own accord. And do you like it, that *such Diseases* should be cherished in the Church? To which I answer, that I would have these Distempers cured without *Wounds and Cauteries*, especially because the *Truth*, unless it be oppressed by force, or *scorned* by men, who are blind with the Love of Vices, is never wont to be Supplanted by those pernicious *Errours*; yea, this Daughter, and Foster-Child of *Time*, always growing *stronger* with very age, doth with the beams of her light dissolve and melt all the waxen Arguments of *Falshood*, unless one of those twain before mentioned, doth hinder: both which ought to be banished from the true Church of Christ. For since by force, or the allurement of our affections, as well *Falshood* as *Truth* may be promoted, (if yet Truth may be so promoted) but by a free *Dispute* in mutual Love, only *Truth*; and *Falshood* sometimes putteth on the Vizor of *Truth*; it is a safer course to keep this way only in the Church, which having shut out Errour, lieth open to *Truth*, than whil'st we endeavour by all means to insinuate *Truth* into men, to leave and prepare an Entrance for *Falshood*. And therefore to cashiere the lighter Errors, (for the Objection speaketh not of the lightest) the Care and Vigilancy of the Pastors is sufficient; who will find that the love due to erring Persons, will no whit retard them in pulling up *false Opinions* according to their ability. However, should it never so much be granted, that in the Infancy of the Church, and in her following growth, these Errours, which outwardly appear somewhat light, but inwardly contain very much, were not tolerated, yet will it not be evinced from thence, that they ought not at this day to be tolerated in the old Age of the Church. For they deceive and are deceived, who model our times by the

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pattern of that flourishing age. The crazie health of the Church cannot be restored with the same remedies. Many things stifle a disease in the birth, which when it is grown up do foment it. When the Church was sound and lusty, in the prime flower of her age, and whilst the *Colledge of the Apostles* was yet living, even violent remedies were to be used towards her, because of her vigour. Whereas now being spent with diseases and old age, and become feeble, she doth in a manner sink under the weight of her prevailing sickness, and is never in more danger, then when she falleth into the hands of *Cruel* Physicians. Heretofore her former vigor did admit the opening of a vein, and taking away of Blood: but now after her strength hath been exhausted with so many Maladies, if their be any vital juyce remaining, it cannot be let out, but the very life and spirit will issue forth together. Believe me, ye that talk of nothing but Launcets and Cauteries, will with your unseasonable Physick *kill the Church*, if ye let out that little Blood which is remaining, in this nick of time which she seemeth to be almost a dying. Whatsoever remedies have been invented for the health and conservation of the Church, as this is touching the punishment of *Hereticks*, should then, as prudence teacheth, be omitted, when they bring more hurt and danger, then profit. For why desire we that the people of God should like a lump of mouldring stuff be further crumbled into infinite pieces? What end of Schisms will there be, if a promiscuous dissent be sufficient to make a rent? Why take we pleasure to behold not the *Coat* only, as a Great man wrote, but the *very Body* of Christ, whereof he is the Head, to be cut and torn in pieces? But let the respect of profit take place: let us see whether it be lawful for us at this time to chase those erring Persons from the communion of Christs Church. For there is a wide difference between them, and *those Hereticks* that were contemporary with the Apostles. For suppose them, who now-a-days err in matters of Faith, to make their appearance before the reverend consistory of the Apostles and their Associates; suppose them to be often convicted and admonished, and nevertheless to persist obstinate, though in the least error, who would not detest their *Malice*? Certainly a very slight error would now be transmitted into the nature of a wicked crime. And why so? Because they durst *resist the holy Spirit* speaking by the Apostles: and when they had *no cause* to question the Doctrine and Faith of that most sacred Councel, unless they would withal question the whole Christian Religion, yea, did not give credence thereunto,

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not obey it, and nevertheless would be accounted Christians, What madness, what wickedness, what perversness was it, when by this very incredulity they do sufficiently testifie that they were *not Christians*, as who denyed belief to the Apostles and their Associates, and yet under a pretence of Christianity, did pester the Church with deceit and lyes? Besides, the malice of such men was in the beginning far more manifest, in that a blemish may sooner be discovered in a clean Body, then one that is spotted. And therefore it was an easie matter to espie and punish the wickedness of such men, as did turn aside out of the common road, that never had been called in question. But now though we have a very strong persuasion concerning the certainty of our Faith, yet who hath herein given us caution, or security, that we *cannot err*? What Councel can he at this day imagin so corrupt, as that of the Apostles, or the Primitive Church? And yet how many Prescriptions may you behold in this age? how many Degrees, whereby men for the slightest matters exclude one another out of Heaven and the Church? I speak not these things, as if I thought any question were to be made concerning the *soundness* of the Orthodox Opinion: but to make it plain, first, that we ought *more thoroughly*, then the Apostles heretofore, to condemn such as are tardy in this behalf; and secondly, that we should not in light matters be *over-confident* of our knowledge and persuasion, and finally, that even in weightier things, provided they do not subvert our Faith in the Lord Jesus, and the obedience of his Commandments, we may and are bound to tolerate the weakness of such as err. For what matters it, for me certainly to know that I hold the saving Doctrine in these points, if this be not manifest to all Christians, or if I cannot always very clearly demonstrate the same to him that erreth? Have not all a far juster cause of questioning the true Opinion now-a-days, then heretofore in the time of the Apostles? And suitably a man very easily slip in such things through *Imprudence*, which heretofore could not be done without the intervening of extream *Impiety*. Nor is there need of Malice for continuance in error, where prejudice is sufficient, and a suspicion of error firmly imprinted in the mind against the patrons of the true opinion. Which certainly may easily seise even on an honest heart, especially because every sect of Christians instil into their partisans at the first a hatred and abhorrency of others, and from their very cradle sow in their hearts their own Tenets, which having once taken root, can hardly be pulled thence

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in their riper age. Now what cruelty is it, to cast out of the bosom and lap of the Church, such Persons as are studious of *Honesty* and *Truth*, ye seek an agreement only for those Errors, which have been implanted in them without any fault of theirs, and do not overthrow Salvation? But they are *Hereticks*, and to be avoided, as such who are condemned of their own Conscience. Yea, for the fore-alleadged Causes they are *not condemned* of their own Conscience; and therefore neither now to be avoided, nor Hereticks. Or if we take no compassion on them, yet let us at least take pity on the very *Truth* which we defend, whose growth we envy, first, because we drive others from a nearer prying into her; and next, because we teach by our own example, that she, if charged with false suspicions, of right may, and ought to be excluded by other Christian Churches.

The Postscript to the Reader.

LEst the following Papers, Christian Reader, being left empty, should beguile thy sight, I have thought good in this place again to bespeak thee with a word or two. By this time thou hast perceived our mind and drift, which both the author of this Discourse had before his eyes when he wrote it, and I also when I published the same, for thy behoof and benefit. If thou hast but a grain of candor in thy heart, and wilt pass sentence according to the postscript of Truth, thou wilt judge and call this Writing not Heretical, *but* Peaceable. *But you will say, What peace, what agreement either can or ought a Christian man to have with* Hereticks? *Good Reader, we undertake not the patronage of* Hereticks. *But before you exclude* others *out of the verge of Christian charity, and throw the thunder-bolt of an Anathema upon them, you should well weigh and consider, to whom the crime of Heresie is justly to be imputed. In passing censure upon Hereticks, it was not so easie a matter to mistake in that Golden age, wherein the Christian Church was founded by the Apostles, and governed by themselves, as in this Age of ours. For though in those beginnings of the Christian Church there did divers Errors, yea, and Heresies spring up, nevertheless from that confusion of dissenting Opinions, there were not peculiar Churches, distinguished by divers forms of Confessions and Ceremonies, as yet started up, but there was then one only Christian Church, and she truly Apostolical,*

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and in all points of Doctrine, which she professed, of a sound belief. Wherefore to contradict this Church, *and her doctrine, was truly blasphemous, truly* Heretical: *and whomsoever, either the Apostles themselves, or also other Apostolical Doctors of the Primitive Church declared Hereticks, they might also deservedly be accounted such by all Christians, and there was no danger of error in that censure, no not among the more ignorant Christians, as following the judgment of the very Holy Spirit, by whom those Divine Governours of the Church were guided, as appeared by most evident Arguments. But at this day, inasmuch as there are, alas! so many and so various Churches of Christians, which of all will be so bold as to ascend with like confidence to that of the Apostles, to that sacred Tribunal, from which she may pronounce sentence on the rest, as Heretical? It is out of controversie, that such an authority can agree to no more then one of them. For the true Church can be but* one: *and only the true one is able to judge and condemn all the rest as Heretical. Now forasmuch as amongst all those Churches, which will at this day be called Christian, (I justly here except the vain arrogancy of the* Roman Church) *none dares undoubtedly to arrogate to it self the infallible certainty of the Apostolical Truth in all the heads of her Confession, it may hence clearly enough appear, that the censure of Heretical Pravity doth so evidently agree to none of them, that we deservedly ought also to acquiesce in her determination. I am not ignorant of what the greatest part of our Divines are here wont to reply. That the Primitive Apostolical Church, say they, is ceased, we do not deny: yet inasmuch as we have the doctrine of that Church consigned in the monuments of the Evangelists and the Apostles, we cannot chuse but pronounce them Hereticks, who contradict the Doctrine there expressed. I also, dear Friends, easily permit, that in this dispute of ours, the Divine Writings of the Apostles stand in this stead, so that he which contradicteth them, be no less esteemed an Heretick, then he that heretofore contumaciously opposed the Apostles preaching by word of mouth. But even thus can we not challenge that censorian rod against Heretick, For they, whom ye place in the rank of Hereticks, are so far from contradicting the Holy Scripture, that they wage war against you out of the same, and appeal to the judgment thereof, not without a certain hope of victory, in the examination of their cause, inasmuch as they embrace the Scripture in all things, with as great a veneration of mind as you do: nor amongst all the Christian Churches, which are at this day extant, shall ye shew any one (that I know of) which doth not religiously, and from the Heart yield an undoubted assent to all those things, that are proposed and taught in the Holy Scripture. Wherefore*

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there is no cause why ye should condemn any one of them for heresie, since they agree with you in giving due credence to the Sacred Writ. And therefore what soever pretence ye seek for your carnal zeal against such as you call Hereticks, yet to indifferent judgments can no other ground hereof appear, then their dissent from your Interpretation of the Holy Scripture, as to the controverted Doctrines. But I will here bountifully grant you, that ye have in all things hit the true sense of the Scripture, and defend it. Nevertheless it is further requisite, that ye make this plain to them, whom ye brand with the crime of Heresie. But what here is the stress of your Arguments? Ye appeal again to the Holy Scripture, and from thence condemn Hereticks. But they have already stricken this weapon out of your hands, shewing that the Holy Scripture maketh for you, only in your own sense and interpretation, and they that are accordingly condemned by you, not from the sacred Scripture, but from your *interpretation of the sacred Scripture. And this is the circle of your arguing, which they deservedly reject. Draw out therefore against Hereticks those truly Apostolical weapons, not the Thrasonical prating of the Chair in the University, but the power of the holy Spirit, wherewith the Apostles being endued, could deliver Blasphemers to Satan,* 1 Tim. 1. 20. *and slay Hypocrites with the speaking of a word,* Act. 5. *If ye want the powerful efficacy of the Spirit, acknowledge your rashness and iniquity in condemning them, to whom ye are not able with evident and sufficient arguments to demonstrate your interpretation of the holy Scripture, and who by the same right, and from the same foundation object to you not only Errors, but also Heresies. Ye know that of Christ:* Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned. *What account will ye give to this just Judge, for so often violating this precept? Your zeal of the Divine Glory will not then excuse you: for though it pallate it self under this reverend Name, yet it is wholly of the flesh, and odious to God. But if ye affirm that it proceedeth from the Holy Spirit, produce arguments worthy of so great an Author. For neither is this Spirit so weak, but that he can shew forth tokens of his Divine authority and presence in his Ministers, and by them against his Enemies. But whither am I carried away? I beseech thee, good Reader, to pardon this digression of mine; and having liked the pious counsel of our Author, intreat God, that he would instil into other Readers also a Mind studious of Peace and Concord.* Farewel.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 2. line 20. dele *Ceremonies*. p. 3. l. 12. read *propose*. p. 4. l. 15. r. *in vain*. p. 5. l. 7. r. *a wrong*. l. 24. r. *to be the*. d. *to*. p. 10. l. 35. r. *Majesty*. p. 11. l. 15. r. *impulsion*. p. 12. l. 3. r. *the truer Opinion*. l. 21. r. *all means*. p. 29. l. 25. r. *ignorant*. p. 31. l. 18. r. *effect*. p. 38. l. 17. r. *when*. p. 39. l. 14. r. *uncorrupt*. l. 31. r. *may very*. p. 40. l. 3. r. *yea*. l. 22. r. *prescript*. p. 42. l. 13. r. *that they*. l. 29. r. *palliate*. p. 29. l. 28. r. [illegible] Lot